

# **THE EMPLOYEE'S GUIDE TO CAREER TRANSITION**

**U.S. OFFICE OF  
PERSONNEL  
MANAGEMENT**

**WORKFORCE  
RESTRUCTURING OFFICE**

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# EMPLOYEE'S GUIDE TO CAREER TRANSITION

## I. INTRODUCTION:

As the Federal Government continues to downsize, many employees find themselves having to "transition" to new careers, especially to occupations in the private sector. This change can be frustrating, and bring about many questions from employees who are, for the first time in many years, in the position of having to move from one career to another.

The President recognized this and recently directed Federal agencies to provide more assistance to employees affected by downsizing. One of the primary concerns of the President is that employees start viewing career transition differently, and begin focusing on using available services to move to the private sector.

This "**Employee's Guide to Career Transition**" covers new career transition services that are available to help affected Federal employees find other jobs, both within and outside the Federal Government. This new help will be available from both an employee's own agency and on an interagency basis beginning February 29, 1996.

**Background:** On September 12, 1995, President Clinton issued a directive that Federal agencies provide increased assistance to their employees who are affected by reduction in force (RIF). As a result, all Executive branch agencies must set up new career transition programs for their employees who are affected by RIF. On December 29, 1995, OPM issued regulations implementing the President's directive, and Executive branch agencies are moving forward in developing their plans.

**Agency Career Transition Assistance Plans (CTAPs):** Agency programs will consist of three parts:

- 1) offering career transition services to assist all agency employees affected by downsizing;
- 2) giving special selection priority to agency surplus and displaced employees (those who have been identified for separation by RIF) who apply for competitive service agency vacancies in the local commuting area; and
- 3) maintaining a Reemployment Priority List to provide rehiring priority to displaced agency employees.

**Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP):** In addition, as part of this effort, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is changing the manner in which displaced Federal workers receive priority consideration for employment in other

agencies and is suspending the current Interagency Placement Program (IPP). Instead of being referred through the passive, centralized IPP which has proven to be ineffective, displaced employees will now be given the tools and resources to target specific positions in which they are interested, apply directly to agencies for the jobs, and exercise special selection priority for vacancies in other agencies.

***DOD Employees:*** The requirement to establish an internal agency CTAP does not affect the operation of the Department of Defense (DOD) Priority Placement Program. This program will continue to provide excellent placement assistance to Defense workers affected by downsizing. DOD will be providing career transition services to its employees in accordance with the President's memorandum. In addition, displaced DOD workers, like employees of other agencies, will be eligible to participate in the Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan.

**Agency Career Transition Services:** Each agency will provide career transition services to its employees to give them the skills and resources necessary to find other employment. These services can include skills assessment, resume preparation, counselling and job search assistance, etc. The President's directive also requires agencies to develop policies for retraining their employees who are affected by downsizing.

**Agency Special Selection Priority:** Well-qualified surplus or displaced agency employees who apply for vacancies inside their own agency (including agency components) that are in the local commuting area, must be selected before any other candidate, from within or outside the agency. When agencies recruit to fill vacancies, they should notify their surplus or displaced employees of opportunities.

**Agency Reemployment Priority Lists (RPL):** Each agency is also required to establish and maintain an RPL for each commuting area in which it separates eligible employees due to a reduction in force. RPL assistance is available as soon as employee has received a RIF separation notice and for up to 2 years after separation.

When agencies fill positions with candidates from outside the agencies, employees registered on the agency's RPL must be considered before anyone from outside the agency can be hired.

**Interagency Career Transition Assistance:** Effective February 29, 1996, the OPM Interagency Placement Program is being replaced by a new form of assistance. In its place is a new system which requires agencies to select displaced employees for vacancies in other agencies when the employee applies directly for the vacancy and is determined by the agency to be well-qualified for the job.

**Employee Empowerment:** Both agency Career Transition Assistance Plans and the Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan are based on a new "employee

empowerment" concept. Under the "employee empowerment" concept, agencies will provide their affected employees the tools and resources necessary to find other jobs.

Because of the severe downsizing expected over the next few years, the President's memorandum and OPM's new regulations take a new approach to helping surplus and displaced workers find other jobs - individual employee empowerment. Instead of operating centralized referral programs which have proven to be highly ineffective, "employee empowerment" puts more control in the hands of employees.

Some experts have said that the key to successful career transition is individual initiative. Under the "employee empowerment" concept, employees will be given the resources necessary to assist them in pursuing other employment, both within or outside the Federal Government. If individual workers have the skills, resources, and initiative to find and apply for positions, it is believed that this would motivate and reenforce an employee's self-interest in finding other employment.

**Changes from Current Placement Assistance:** These plans significantly change the way career transition and outplacement assistance is provided to surplus and displaced employees. Major changes include:

- Giving surplus and displaced employees new tools and resources to find other jobs, within or outside the Federal Government. If individuals have the power to find, apply, and exercise selection priority for specific vacancies in which they themselves are interested, it is believed that this would motivate and reinforce an employee's self interest in finding other employment.
- Increasing the help agencies provide their surplus and displaced employees in obtaining new employment. This is done through 1) career transition assistance to support job search efforts, and 2) selection priority for internal agency vacancies.
- Expanding assistance efforts beyond the Federal employment arena. The skills, resources, and initiative that employees develop in this process can be used equally to find Federal vacancies or jobs in the private sector. This is important since Federal hiring is expected to be limited in the foreseeable future, and the President recommends that employees also look to the private sector for opportunities. State and local government programs will also play a major role in this effort.

## **II. WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?**

For further information regarding your agency's specific CTAP and the ICTAP, please contact your personnel office. Agency personnel representatives are available to assist you with these new career transition services.

You can obtain additional information about career transition from OPM's new Career Transition Forum on OPM's MAINSTREET electronic bulletin board (with modem dial 202-606-4800 and select the Career Transition Forum). Employees also may also leave messages and/or questions on the bulletin board for OPM Workforce Restructuring Office career transition professionals. In addition, OPM's new Career Transition Hotline, 202-606-2425, includes up-to-date career transition information so you may call for the latest news and/or order material.

Comprehensive information on worldwide Federal job opportunities is available from OPM by phone (912-757-3000; 912-744-2299 for TDD) or electronic bulletin board (912-757-3100).

### **III. WHAT OTHER CAREER TRANSITION MATERIAL IS AVAILABLE TO ME?**

Other employee guides available through OPM's Workforce Restructuring Office include the "Employee's Guide to RIF" and the "Employee's Guide to RIF Separation Benefits." All career transition material may be ordered from OPM's Career Transition Forum or its Career Transition Hotline (phone numbers are listed above). You may also request a copy of President Clinton's career transition memorandum of September 12, 1995 via the hotline.

### **IV. WHAT CAN I DO TO PROTECT MY INTERESTS IF MY AGENCY IS PLANNING A RIF?**

**Introduction:** When Federal agencies cut back operations or reorganize, the jobs of their employees are among the first things affected. While agencies use a number of tools to reduce staffing levels without adversely hurting employees, such as early retirement, separation incentives (buyouts), and attrition, sometimes the magnitude of budget and workload cuts require them to separate employees involuntarily through RIF.

Reduction in force is a process established in law and regulation that agencies must follow before they separating or downgrading Federal employees because of lack of funds or work. In reductions in force, employees compete for retention based on four objective factors: tenure, eligibility for veterans preference, seniority, and performance rating.

**Employee Action:** Here are four (4) steps that you as a Federal employee can take to prepare yourself if RIF's in your agency seem likely.

1. **Make sure your records in the personnel office are complete.** Do they list all your Federal service and the experience, education, and qualifications you have? Is there documentation on file showing your last three performance ratings and whether you have veterans preference? Are the duties and responsibilities listed in your position description accurate and up-to-date? These are critical factors in determining your RIF rights.

2. **Understand how the RIF process works.** Your personnel office can give you pamphlets that explain the RIF process. You can also get these from OPM's MAINSTREET computer bulletin board (Downsizing Forum) at 202-606-4800. If neither source is available to you, call OPM's Workforce Restructuring Office at 202-606-0960, and we will be happy to send you a copy.
3. **Determine your financial needs and what benefits you would qualify for if you are separated.** Your personnel office can give you an estimate of your monthly annuity if you are eligible for retirement. They can also estimate how much severance pay you would receive if you are not eligible for retirement, and the amount of unemployment benefits you may qualify for. The personnel staff can also tell you how you can continue your health insurance on an interim basis after your separation. Start the financial planning process now!
4. **Take advantage of the services your agency provides to help you move to a new career.** Many agencies are setting up transition centers where employees can get help with resume preparation, interviewing techniques and job leads. If it is likely you will be separated, they can also help you get placement consideration in other Federal agencies. Usually they will allow you a certain amount of official time to get transition help. The sooner you begin this the better.

## V. **SPECIAL SELECTION PRIORITY FOR VACANCIES IN YOUR OWN AGENCY** \*\*

The following questions and answers apply to the minimum standards agencies must follow in providing their employees selection priority for agency vacancies. Each agency will supplement these regulations with a specific Career Transition Assistance Plan to assist their workers. You should check with your agency's personnel office for the specific provisions which in your agency.

**\*\* *Department of Defense (DOD) Employees:*** This special selection priority does not apply to DOD employees. The DOD Priority Placement Program remains in effect.

### **How do I get special selection priority for vacancies in my own agency?**

**Notification:** When your agency recruits to fill a vacancy, it must notify you of the opportunity if you are an eligible employee. It will also inform you of all qualification requirements, selective factors, and knowledge, skills, and abilities that employees must possess to be considered well-qualified. (Each agency sets up its own notification procedures. Examples might include individually notifying each eligible employee or posting vacancy announcements where all employees can see them.)

**Application:** Then, if you are an eligible employee, you may exercise your special

selection priority by:

1. Applying directly for a vacancy in your agency that is in the local commuting area from which you are being (or may be) separated.
2. Attaching proof of eligibility, examples of which are your RIF separation notice, Certificate of Expected Separation; or other agency certification identifying you as being in a surplus organization or occupation.

**Qualifications Review:** The agency will then review your application material against the qualification requirements, selective factors, and knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the position and determine if you are well-qualified for that particular job.

**Selection:** If your agency deems you well-qualified for the vacancy, it must select you over any other non-eligible employee from within or outside your agency.

If more than one eligible surplus or displaced employee is determined to be well-qualified, the agency may select any eligible agency employee over another if it chooses or may decide the order of selection among eligible employees (e.g., select a displaced employee over a surplus employee; select an eligible employee from a particular agency component over an eligible employee from another agency component).

If no eligible employees are available, the agency is free to fill a position with a employee who is not eligible for the special selection priority.

### **For what positions may I exercise my selection priority?**

Generally, eligible employees may apply for and, when determined to be well-qualified, exercise selection priority for vacancies in the local commuting area that are in any component of your agency/department. More specific coverage will be described in your agency's career transition plan.

A vacancy is a competitive service position lasting 90 days or more which the agency is filling, regardless of whether the agency issues a specific vacancy announcement.

### **May I exercise this priority for higher graded positions?**

No. You can only exercise this benefit for positions that are at or below the grade level of the position from which you are being (or may be) separated that does not have any higher promotion potential.

### **Am I limited to what series I may exercise my selection priority?**

No. You may apply for any position for which you are interested and qualified, but if you turn down a valid job offer, the agency has the right to discontinue your selection priority.

**If I'm not sure that I'm qualified for a particular position, where may I go to find out if I am?**

Your personnel office or agency career transition center is available to assist you in determining the positions for which you may be qualified.

**When am I considered an "eligible employee"?**

To be considered an "eligible employee" for the special selection priority in your own agency, you must meet all of the following 6 conditions:

1. Be a surplus or displaced employee who is being (or may be) separated by reduction in force from an Executive branch agency which is required to follow OPM hiring procedures.
2. Have a current performance rating of record of at least Level III (fully successful or equivalent).
3. Apply for a vacancy that is at or below the grade level from which you are being (or may be) separated that does not have a higher career ladder.
4. Occupy a position in the same commuting area of the vacancy.
5. File an application for a specific vacancy within the timeframes established by the agency.
6. Be determined by the agency to be well-qualified for the specific vacancy.

**What is a surplus employee?**

A "**surplus**" employee is a current agency employee serving under an appointment in the competitive service, in tenure group I or II (career or career-conditional), who has received notification that he/she is likely to be separated by reduction in force. This notification may include:

- Certificate of Expected Separation.
- Other certification issued by the agency which identifies the employee as being in a surplus organization or occupation.

**What is a displaced employee?**



A "**displaced** employee" is a current agency employee serving under an appointment in the competitive service, in tenure group I or II, who has received a specific reduction in force separation notice.

### **Who is not eligible for special selection priority?**

Unless your agency has made special arrangement, you are not eligible to exercise selection priority for vacancies in your own agency under this program if you are an employee who is:

- In the excepted service.
- Downgraded or reassigned due to reduction in force, but is not actually separated.
- Located outside the commuting area where the vacancy is occurring.
- Being (or may be) separated from a temporary or term position in the competitive service.
- Being (or may be) separated from an agency other than an Executive branch agency that is required to follow OPM hiring procedures.
- Being (or may be) separated from a Senior Executive Service (SES) position.

### **What type of assistance is available for employees who are not eligible for special selection priority?**

Section IX of this guide discusses services that agency may provide to employees affected downsizing. Employees may use the agency services to prepare them for other employment.

SES employees are eligible for placement assistance through a special SES placement program. If you are an SES employee who is being (or may be) separated by reduction in force, your agency personnel office will have more information regarding this program.

Although agencies which are not required to follow OPM hiring procedures are exempt from the directive to provide career transition services to their employees, many are doing so. Consult your personnel office for further details.

### **When does my eligibility begin?**

You are eligible for the special selection priority in your own agency when you receive a RIF separation notice, a Certificate of Expected Separation, or other certification

(whichever is earliest) identifying you as being in a surplus organization or occupation.

**When does my eligibility expire?**

Your eligibility for special selection priority for vacancies in your own agency expires on the earliest of:

- The date you are separated by RIF.
- Cancellation of the RIF separation notice, Certificate of Expected Separation, or other certification identifying you as surplus.
- When you receive a career, career-conditional, or excepted service position without time limit in any agency.

**What happens if I decline a job offer? Do I lose my eligibility?**

Agencies will determine their own policy in this area.

**What happens to my eligibility if I accept a part-time job?**

You would lose your priority selection eligibility if it is a permanent part-time position (e.g., filled with a career or career-conditional appointment).

**If I take a temporary or term job, do I lose my special selection eligibility?**

No. You only lose eligibility if you received a career, career-conditional, or excepted appointment without time limit in any agency.

**What happens if I accept a position outside of the Federal Government? Am I still eligible for the special selection priority?**

Yes, when you take employment outside the Federal Government, you maintain eligibility until it expires or you accept a Federal position.

**What does "well-qualified" mean?**

"Well-qualified" means that an eligible employee:

- 1a. Meets the qualification standard and eligibility requirements for the position, including any medical qualifications and minimum educational and experience

requirements.

1b. Meets all selective factors where applicable. Meets appropriate quality rating factor levels as determined by the agency.

1c. Is physically qualified, with reasonable accommodation where appropriate, to perform the essential duties of the position.

1d. Meets any special qualifying condition(s) that OPM has approved for the position.

1e. Is able to satisfactorily perform the duties of the position upon entry.

OR

2. Is rated by the agency to be above minimally qualified candidates in accordance with the agency's specific selection process. (Contact your agency for specifics.)

If an agency determines that you are not well-qualified, it must explain its reasoning, should you inquire.

**Does the definition of well-qualified vary between positions or agencies?**

Yes. Each position has its own qualification requirements, selective factors, and knowledge, skills, and abilities. Since each determination is different, it is best to tailor your resume for each position for which you apply.

**Where can I go if I have a complaint about my agency's decision if I'm determined not to be well-qualified?**

It is recommended that each agency have a problem resolution coordinator to handle these types of situations, but if that is not the case, your personnel office should be able to help you.

**What does local commuting area mean?**

Local commuting area is determined by the agency filling the vacancy and is the geographic area that usually constitutes one area for employment purposes. It includes any population center and the surrounding localities in which people live and can reasonably be expected to travel back and forth daily to their usual employment.

**What happens if I move? Am I eligible for the special selection priority for Federal vacancies in my new geographic area?**

No, not unless your agency chooses to expand the area in which it wants to afford the priority.

## **VI. DO AGENCIES HAVE TO MAINTAIN OTHER PLACEMENT PROGRAMS**

In addition to affording eligible current employees special selection priority for internal vacancies, agencies also maintain Reemployment Priority Lists (RPL) to give rehiring priority to employees who have RIF notices and those who are separated from competitive service positions by RIF.

### **Reemployment Priority List (RPL)**

#### **What is a Reemployment Priority List?**

The RPL is a mechanism by which agencies give reemployment consideration to their competitive service employees who are being or were separated by RIF. Under OPM regulations, each agency must establish an RPL for each commuting area in which it separates competitive service employees.

As an RPL registrant, an agency must give you priority consideration for competitive service vacancies in any component of your agency before filling jobs with certain candidates from outside the agency.

Your agency must give you priority consideration for positions filled at the grade level(s) for which you are registered in the RPL. It may fill a position at a higher or lower grade should it choose without giving you rehiring priority.

#### **Does being on the RPL give me hiring preference in other agencies?**

No. The RPL gives you hiring preference in other components of your agency that are in the local commuting area of the position from which you were (or are being separated).

#### **When does the agency have to consider me through the RPL?**

Agencies must give RPL registrants priority consideration when filling competitive service vacancies, regardless of whether the agency plans to make a temporary, term, or permanent appointment. This means that if you indicated interest on your RPL application for a nonpermanent job, the agency must consider you for nonpermanent positions.

When a qualified RPL registrant is available, an agency may not fill a permanent or temporary competitive service by:

- A new appointment (unless the individual appointed is a 10 point veteran).
- Transfer or reemployment (unless the individual appointed is exercising restoration or reemployment rights).

**Can the agency fill positions with other candidates without having to consider me from the RPL?**

Yes, agencies may fill positions without having to consider RPL registrants under the following circumstances:

- No qualified RPL registrants are available, they decline the position, or they fail to respond to an agency inquiry of interest.
- A current, qualified agency employee is available through detail, noncompetitive conversion to the competitive service; reappointment without a break in service; or extension of a temporary appointment.
- By a 30-day special needs or 700 hour handicap appointment.
- At a grade level different than that for which you are registered.

**When am I eligible for the RPL? When does this eligibility expire?**

You are eligible for registration in your agency's RPL when you receive a specific reduction in force separation notice or an official Certificate of Expected Separation.

You must register within 30 calendar days after the RIF separation date. If you are separated as a career employee, you will be given 2 years of rehiring priority by your agency after it registers you in the RPL. If you are separated as a career-conditional employee, your eligibility will last for 1 year.

Your eligibility also expires if you:

- Request removal from the RPL.
- Receive a career, career-conditional, or excepted service appointment without time limit in any agency.
- Decline an offer of a career, career-conditional, or excepted service appointment without time limit.
- Fail to respond to an agency's inquiry of interest.
- Separate for some other reason before the RIF separation takes effect (such as retirement or resignation).
- Decline an interview or fail to appear for a scheduled interview (if this condition is explained up front by the agency).

## How do I apply for the RPL?

Your agency will provide you with an agency developed application form. On this form you must specify the conditions under which you will accept employment including:

- Grade.
- Occupation.
- Minimum hours of work per week.

You can register for as many positions as you like. Your agency personnel specialists should be available to help you determine for which positions you are qualified.

## VII. SPECIAL SELECTION PRIORITY FOR VACANCIES IN OTHER AGENCIES

### How do I get special selection priority for vacancies in other agencies?

Notification: When an agency recruits to fill a vacancy with candidates from outside the agency, it must list the vacancy on OPM's Federal Job Opportunity Bulletin Board. The listing will contain all qualification requirements, selective factors, and knowledge, skills, and abilities that candidates must possess to be considered well-qualified.

Application: If you are an eligible candidate for interagency selection purposes, you may exercise your special selection priority by:

1. **Applying directly** for a vacancy in any component of your agency that is **in the local commuting area** from which you are being (or may be) separated.
2. Attaching proof of eligibility (e.g., your RIF separation notice).

Qualifications Review: The agency will then review your application material against the qualification requirements, selective factors, and knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the position and determine if you are well-qualified for that particular job.

Selection: When filling the position, the agency must first consider its own employees who are eligible for selection priority for positions within the agency. It must then consider employees eligible under its Reemployment Priority List.

After internal candidates are considered, if you are deemed well-qualified for the vacancy, the agency must select you over any other candidate from outside the agency who is not eligible for selection priority.

Any time during the recruitment process, the agency may select any of its own employees. In addition, it may select any eligible candidate from a different agency over

another eligible candidate.

### **For what positions may I exercise my selection priority?**

As an eligible candidate, you may apply for and exercise selection priority for vacancies that are:

- in the local commuting area
- in any agency
- at or below the grade level with no higher promotion potential than the position from which you were (or are being) separated.

### **When am I considered an "eligible candidate"?**

To be considered an "eligible candidate" for the interagency selection, you must meet the following conditions:

1. Be a displaced employee who has been (or is being) separated from an Executive branch agency which is required to follow OPM hiring procedures.
2. Have a current (or last) performance rating of record of at least Level III (fully successful or equivalent), except for former employees separated because of a compensable injury or retired under the discontinued service option, or a former military reserve/national guard technician who is receiving the special OPM disability annuity.
3. Apply for a vacancy that is at or below the grade level from which you are being (or may be) separated that does not have a higher career ladder.
4. Occupy or have been displaced from a position in the same commuting area of the vacancy.
5. File an application for a specific vacancy within the timeframes established by the agency.
6. Be determined by the agency to be well-qualified for the specific vacancy.

### **What is a "displaced" employee?**

A "displaced employee" means:

- A current or former career or career-conditional (tenure group I or II)

competitive service employee, who has received a specific RIF separation notice.

- A former career or career-conditional employee who was separated because of a compensable injury, whose compensation has been terminated, and whose former agency is unable to place him/her.
- A former career or career-conditional competitive service employee who retired with a disability.
- A former career or career-conditional competitive service employee in receipt of a RIF separation notice who retired on the effective date of the RIF or under the discontinued service option.
- A former career or career-conditional competitive service employee who is separated because he/she declined a transfer of function or directed reassignment to another commuting area.
- A former Military Reserve or National Guard Technician who is receiving a special OPM disability retirement annuity.

### **Who is not eligible for special selection priority?**

You are not eligible to exercise selection priority for vacancies in other agencies if you are an employee who is:

- Downgraded or reassigned by a reduction in force, but is not actually separated.
- Being (or may be) separated from a temporary or term position in the competitive service or from an excepted service position.
- Being (or may be) separated from an agency other than an Executive branch agency that is required to follow OPM hiring procedures.
- Being (or may be) separated from a Senior Executive Service (SES) position.

### **What type of assistance is available for these employees who are not eligible for special selection priority?**

Section IX of this guide discusses services that each agency must provide to all of its employees. These employees may use the agency services to prepare them for other employment.

SES employees are eligible for placement assistance through a special SES placement



program. If you are an SES employee who is being (or may be) separated by reduction in force, your agency personnel office will have more information regarding this program.

Although agencies who are not required to follow OPM hiring procedures are exempt from the directive to provide career transition services to their employees, many are doing so. Consult your personnel office for further details.

### **When does my eligibility begin?**

You are eligible for the special selection priority in other agencies upon the date (whichever is earliest):

- The agency issued you a RIF separation notice.
- An agency certifies that it cannot place you after you were separated due to a compensable injury.
- The National Guard Bureau or Military Department certifies that you received a disability retirement and are receiving the special OPM annuity.

### **If I took a buyout, am I eligible for career transition services or the special selection priority?**

If you retire or resign with a buyout, you are not entitled to placement assistance because employees volunteer to leave the Federal service with an incentive payment. Placement assistance is for employees who are involuntarily separated.

### **When does my eligibility expire?**

Your eligibility for special selection priority for vacancies in other agencies expires on the earliest of:

- 1 year after separation, unless you were separated on or after September 12, 1995, and prior to February 29, 1996. In that case, your eligibility would not expire until February 28, 1997.
- February 28, 1997, if you were registered in OPM's Interagency Placement Program (IPP) on or before February 15, 1996, and received a letter from OPM informing you of the demise of the IPP.
- 1 year after your agency certifies that you cannot be placed after being

separated because of a compensable injury.

- 1 year after you receive notification that your disability annuity has been or is being terminated (if you retired with a disability).
- When you receive a career, career-conditional, or excepted service appointment without time limit in any agency.
- When you no longer meet the eligibility requirements (e.g., you are no longer being separated by RIF or you separate by resignation or non-discontinued service retirement prior to the RIF effective date.
- Your eligibility with a specific agency expires if you decline an official offer with that agency.

**What happens if I decline a job offer? Do I lose my eligibility?**

Yes, with the specific agency that made you an official offer which you declined.

**What happens if I accept a part-time job?**

If it is a permanent part-time job (e.g., career or career-conditional), you would lose your priority selection eligibility.

**If I take a temporary or term job, do I lose my special selection eligibility?**

No. You would only lose eligibility if you received a career, career-conditional, or excepted appointment without time limit in any agency.

**What happens if I accept a position outside of the Federal Government? Am I still eligible for the special selection priority?**

Yes, when you take employment outside the Federal Government, you maintain eligibility until it expires or you accept a Federal position.

**What does "well-qualified" mean?**

"Well-qualified" means that an eligible employee:

- 1a. Meets the qualification standard and eligibility requirements for the position, including any medical qualifications, and minimum educational and experience requirements.
- 1b. Meets all selective factors where applicable. Meets appropriate quality rating

factor levels as determined by the agency.

1c. Is physically qualified, with reasonable accommodation where appropriate, to perform the essential duties of the position.

1d. Meets any special qualifying condition(s) that OPM has approved for the position.

1e. Is able to satisfactorily perform the duties of the position upon entry.

OR

2. Is rated by the agency to be above minimally qualified candidates in accordance with the agency's specific selection process. (Please contact your agency for specifics.)

If an agency determines that you are not well-qualified, it must to explain its reasoning, should you inquire.

**Does the definition of well-qualified vary between positions or agencies?**

Yes. Each position has its own qualification requirements, selective factors, and knowledge, skills, and abilities. Since each determination is different, it is best to tailor your resume for each position for which you apply.

**Where can I go if I have a complaint about an agency's decision if I'm determined not to be well-qualified?**

It is recommended that each agency have a problem resolution coordinator to handle these types of situations, but if that is not the case, the agency personnel office should be able to help you.

**What does local commuting area mean?**

Local commuting area is determined by the agency and is the geographic area that usually constitutes one area for employment purposes. It includes any population center and the surrounding localities in which people live and can be reasonably expected to travel back and forth daily to their usual employment.

**What happens if I move? Am I eligible for the special selection priority for Federal vacancies in my new geographic area?**

No, interagency selection priority only applies in the local commuting area from which you were (or are being) separated.

**When can an agency fill a position without having to provide eligible employees selection priority?**

Agencies must select an eligible candidate before selecting any other candidate from outside the agency when making the following actions:

- Competitive appointments (e.g., from competitive examining and direct-hire).
- Noncompetitive appointments.
- Movement between agencies (e.g., transfers).
- Reinstatements (except for former agency displaced employees).
- Time-limited appointments of 90 days or more to the competitive service.

There are several other situations where agencies may fill positions without the special selection priority being a factor. Examples of these exceptions include the following (please note that this is not a comprehensive list):

- Reemployment of former agency employees exercising regulatory or statutory reemployment rights.
- Noncompetitive movement of displaced agency employees or employees moved as the result of a reorganization or transfer of function.
- Selection of agency employees.
- Appointments of 10 point veterans.
- Conversions of specific excepted appointments.

**VIII. INTERAGENCY PLACEMENT PROGRAM (IPP)**

**What if I was registered in the IPP?**

Displaced Federal employees may continue to register in the IPP until February 15, 1996. At that time, IPP registrants will receive a letter and this "Employee's Guide to Career Transition" informing them of the suspension of the IPP and their eligibility for assistance through the Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan. They will have 1 year of eligibility from the date they are notified.

## **IX. CAREER TRANSITION SERVICES**

### **What types of services are available to me to help me find another job?**

Your agency will determine which services best fit its employees' needs. Some examples of career transition services include: skills assessment, resume and cover letter preparation, networking and interviewing techniques, counseling, job search assistance, and more specific retraining (if necessary).

### **When am I eligible to use agency career transition services? When does this eligibility expire?**

Career transition services are available to surplus or displaced employees.

Employee use of these services can continue up to separation, but an agency may provide policies for use of the services after separation.

### **How will these services help me find another job, including employment in the private sector?**

The career transition services you receive from your agency are invaluable. The resume is the most widely used tool to land an interview in the private sector, and agencies can provide special computer programs to help employees develop their own resumes, tailored to individual positions. Agencies can also help you locate other job opportunities through electronic bulletin boards, State and local government employment information services, etc. Agencies can also help you practice interviewing techniques and conduct skills assessment to help you determine occupations which specifically suit your talents.

## **X. JOB INFORMATION**

### **How do I find out about other Federal vacancies?**

Job seekers can use OPM's Federal Employment Information Highway to find out about Federal career opportunities in the following ways:

- **Federal Employment Information Centers (FEIC):** FEICs provide a range of employment and job information to aid individuals during their job search. Actual services vary by location. Check your local telephone directory under U.S. Government (generally listed in the blue pages) for the FEIC nearest you.
- **Federal Job Opportunities Board:** Just dial 912-757-3100 for a computer-based bulletin board system, current worldwide Federal job opportunities, salaries and pay rates, and general and specific employment information. This service is

available worldwide, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

**OR**

You can contact us on the Internet via Telnet and File Transfer Protocol (FTP) at **FJOB.MAIL.OPM.GOV**. Information about obtaining Federal job announcement files via Internet mail should be directed to **INFO@FJOB.MAIL.OPM.GOV**.

- **Career America Connection (CAC):** Just dial 912-757-3000 or 912-744-2299 (TDD Service) for a telephone-based system, current worldwide Federal job opportunities, on-line information and application packages which can be mailed to you, salaries and employment benefits information, and special recruitment messages. This service is also available worldwide, 24 hours a day, 7 day a week.
- **Federal Job Information Touch Screen Computer:** A computer-based system utilizing touch screen technology. This system includes information such as current worldwide Federal job opportunities, on-line information and application packages that can be mailed to you. These computers are available at Federal Employment Information Centers nationwide.

**How do I find out about vacancies in State and local Governments or the private sector?**

Your agency's career transition center will have information on local job information networks which can help you locate employment in your particular area.